

Amendments to the Claims

1. (Currently Amended) A single step process for preparing a solution of polysaccharide or polysaccharide ether having a viscosity of 1,000 mPa.s or less, said process comprising adding to an aqueous medium a polysaccharide or polysaccharide ether and an alkaline depolymerization agent, characterized in that the polysaccharide or polysaccharide ether and the alkaline depolymerization agent are added ~~simultaneously~~ to the aqueous medium in a single step.

2. (Previously Presented) A process according to claim 1, characterized in that a solid composition comprising the polysaccharide or polysaccharide ether and the alkaline depolymerization agent is added to the aqueous medium.

3. (Previously Presented) A process according to claim 1, characterized in that the alkaline depolymerization agent is selected from the group consisting of sodium percarbonate, sodium perborate, carbamide peroxide in combination with a base, sodium persulfate in combination with a base, 3-chloroperoxybenzoic acid (m-CPBA) in combination with a base, and mixtures thereof.

4. (Previously Presented) A process according to claim 1, characterized in that the base is sodium hydroxide or sodium carbonate.

5. (Previously Presented) A process according to claim 3, characterized in that alkaline depolymerization agent is sodium percarbonate, sodium perborate or sodium persulfate in combination with a base.

6. (Previously Presented) A process according to claim 1, characterized in that the polysaccharide ether is selected from the group consisting of carboxymethyl cellulose, hydrophobically modified carboxymethyl cellulose, hydroxyethyl cellulose, hydrophobically modified hydroxyethyl cellulose, and ethyl hydroxyethyl cellulose, and hydrophobically modified ethyl hydroxyethyl cellulose.

7. (Currently Amended) A solid composition for the preparation of aqueous solutions of low molecular weight polysaccharide ethers with a high solids content, said solid composition comprising a polysaccharide ether and an alkaline depolymerization agent, characterized in that the alkaline depolymerization agent is selected from the group consisting of sodium percarbonate, carbamide peroxide in combination with a base, sodium persulfate in combination with a base, 3-chloroperoxybenzoic acid (m-CPBA) in combination with a base, and mixtures thereof.

8. (Previously Presented) A composition according to claim 7, characterized in that the depolymerization agent is sodium percarbonate, or sodium persulfate in combination with a base.

9. (Previously Presented) A composition according to claim 7, characterized in that the polysaccharide ether is selected from the group consisting of carboxymethyl cellulose, hydrophobically modified carboxymethyl cellulose, hydroxyethyl cellulose, hydrophobically modified hydroxyethyl cellulose, ethyl hydroxyethyl cellulose, and hydrophobically modified ethyl hydroxyethyl cellulose.

10. (Previously Presented) A composition according to claim 7 comprising carboxymethyl cellulose and sodium percarbonate.

11. (Previously Presented) A composition according to claim 8, characterized in that the polysaccharide ether is selected from the group consisting of carboxymethyl cellulose, hydrophobically modified carboxymethyl cellulose, hydroxyethyl cellulose, hydrophobically modified hydroxyethyl cellulose, ethyl hydroxyethyl cellulose, and hydrophobically modified ethyl hydroxyethyl cellulose.

12. (Previously Presented) A composition according to claim 8 comprising carboxymethyl cellulose and sodium percarbonate.

13. (Previously Presented) A process for the preparation of aqueous solutions of low molecular weight polysaccharide ethers with a high solids content, said process comprising adding the dry solid composition of claim 7 to an aqueous medium.

14. (new) The process of claim 1 wherein said aqueous media consists of water.